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HEALTH INFORMATION OPERATIONS (HIO) UPDATE

11 April 2003

The HIO Update provides information regarding global medical and veterinary issues of interest to the United States (US) Army. The update does not attempt to analyze the information regarding potential strategic or tactical impact to the US Army and as such, should not be regarded as a medical intelligence product. Medical intelligence products are available at <http://mic.afmic.detrick.army.mil/>. The information in the HIO Update should provide an increased awareness of current and emerging health-related issues.

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HOT TOPICS

Achoo! It Must Be Spring

05 April – Health Scout News reported [seasonal allergic rhinitis](#) affects about 35 million people in the United States, says the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology (AAAAI). Workplace absences caused by allergies cost U.S. companies more than \$250 million a year. Allergic rhinitis can be triggered by a variety of allergens. That includes pollen, which is abundant during the spring. The AAAI offers some tips on how to reduce springtime hay fever misery. [View Article](#)

Breast-fed Infants Need Extra vitamin D

CHICAGO, Illinois (AP) -- The American Academy of Pediatrics says all exclusively breast-fed infants should receive [vitamin D](#) supplements to prevent [rickets](#); a bone-weakening disease, doctors fear may be becoming more common. Breast-fed infants should receive vitamin supplements beginning at 2 months of age and until they begin taking at least 17 ounces daily of vitamin D-fortified milk, the academy says in a new policy statement. The academy recommends multivitamin supplements containing 200 international units of vitamin D, available as over-the-counter liquid drops or tablets. The new recommendation also applies to infants who aren't breast-fed but who don't drink at least 17 ounces of fortified formula or milk daily. Breast milk contains small quantities of vitamin D and doctors used to think babies could get adequate amounts if they also spent time in sunlight, which stimulates the body to produce vitamin D. However, growing concerns about skin cancer and recommendations that youngsters wear sunscreen and avoid excessive sun exposure may be putting some children at risk for vitamin D deficiency and rickets, said Dr. Nancy Krebs, head of the academy's nutrition committee. The new recommendation, being published Monday in April's Pediatrics, was prompted by reports of dozens of cases of rickets nationwide in recent years. [View Article](#)

Cancer Cases 'to Soar'

03 April – BBC News reported global cancer cases could soar by 50% to 15m by 2020, experts predict - but a third could be prevented by healthy lifestyles. The growth in cancer cases will largely be explained by the fact the population is steadily ageing. But smoking is highlighted as a major cause of cancers, along with poor diets and lack of exercise, according to the World

Cancer Report, published by the World Health Organisation. The number of people dying from cancer is predicted to grow from 6.2m to 10m over the period. [View Article](#)

Common Chemicals a Terror Tool

08 April — Nerve agents like [VX](#) and [sarin gas](#) are scary terrorist threats, but a top federal official is more worried about chemicals that travel the nation's highways every day. "They are just as lethal," said Jerry Hauer, acting assistant secretary for public health preparedness at the Department of Health and Human Services. After the 1995 release of sarin gas in a Tokyo subway by the Aum Shinrikyo cult, government officials focused attention on nerve gases, but now they are realizing the threat posed by chemicals that have legitimate uses in American industry, Hauer said in an interview with The Associated Press. "I just believe that at the end of the day, it's a lot easier getting something that's available here in the United States than trying to sneak in sarin," Hauer said. For instance, toxic industrial chemicals such as [chlorine](#), [phosgene](#) and [hydrogen cyanide](#) are readily available. These are among the earliest chemical weapons and were used by troops in World War I. Today, they are commonly used in commercial manufacturing, and experts believe they could easily be used for terrorism. [View Article](#)

Drug Claims to 'Protect Against Dirty Bomb'

08 April – BBC News reported scientists have created a drug, which they say could protect people from the effects of a nuclear attack. The drug, currently called HE2100, has been developed by US company Hollis-Eden Pharmaceuticals. Early tests suggest it can stem the loss of infection-fighting cells in the body and stop bleeding. Scientists at Hollis-Eden have tested the drug on animals. The drug cannot be tested in humans because it would be too dangerous to expose them to radiation. But the animal tests have shown that the drug helps the body to produce white blood cells much more quickly. The company is now planning a larger trial. [View Article](#)

Exercise May Lower Protein Tied to Heart Disease

03 April – Reuters reported regular exercise may help cut blood levels of a protein linked to inflammation and increased heart disease risk, researchers reported at a meeting of the American College of Cardiology. In a study of nearly 3,000 adults, Harvard researchers found that those who got the most exercise had the lowest levels of [C-reactive protein](#) (CRP), a marker of inflammation that has been tied to the risk of [artery disease](#), [heart attack](#) and [stroke](#). In fact, the same researchers recently found in a large study of women that CRP levels were better predictors of heart attack and other cardiovascular problems than levels of "bad" LDL cholesterol were -- although there's no agreement yet on whether people's CRP levels should be routinely checked. [View Article](#)

Group Says Parents Should Store Anti-radiation Pills

08 April – Reuters reported the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) now recommends that parents, schools and child-care centers within 10 miles of a nuclear power plant have ready access to [potassium iodide tablets](#), which can protect children against thyroid cancer in the event of [radiation exposure](#). In a statement to be published in the June issue of Pediatrics, the AAP's journal, the group says it may even be prudent to consider stockpiling potassium iodide

tablets within a larger radius than the 10-mile point, since radiation could become windborne. Children are especially vulnerable to the harmful effects of radiation because their bodies absorb and metabolize substances differently, according to the group, which represents 57,000 U.S. pediatricians. Public health officials stress that potassium iodide tablets do not protect against the other effects of radiation and should not be taken as a preventive measure in advance of a nuclear accident. Instead, residents should wait for instructions from officials. The AAP has called on the FDA to work on developing a child-size dose of potassium iodide. The AAP's new policy statement is available at www.aap.org. [View Article](#)

Herbal Sexual Stimulant Recalled Due to Tampering

08 April – Reuters reported Bionate International Inc., an Arizona-based maker of dietary supplements, is voluntarily recalling 750,000 pills that were sold over the Internet for sexual enhancement because the product may have been laced with the active ingredient in Viagra. The recall involves a product called Vinarol, which corporate officials said appeared to be laced with the active ingredient in Viagra, a prescription drug for impotence made by the New York-based Pfizer Inc. A spokeswoman for the firm told Reuters Health that the recall was initiated on Monday in conjunction with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) after it was discovered that an ex-employee had tampered with the product. According to the company, no side effects associated with the recalled product have been reported to date. The company added that consumers who had purchased the potentially adulterated pills could return them for a refund through the place of purchase. [View Article](#)

Key to Strains of Anthrax is Discovered

07 April – ProMed reported scientists have discovered why different strains of the bacterium that causes [anthrax](#) differ so much in virulence, a finding that, in theory, could produce more effective vaccines and better tools for distinguishing and tracking the lethal germ. But the finding could also aid the creation of designer varieties of anthrax that are potentially deadlier to humans. Because of that potential danger, a debate occurred over whether the discovery should be kept secret. In the end, it was decided that the benefits of publication outweighed the risks. The team's finding centers on the anthrax genome, which consists of a single large chromosome and 2 small circles of DNA, known as plasmids, which carry extra genes. The scientists found that contrary to common belief, each anthrax bacterium carries not just one set of plasmids but up to 243 copies of the first and up to 32 copies of the second, which is known as pX02. The more copies of this plasmid in a bacterial strain, the more capable it is of causing disease, the scientists said. [View Report](#)

'Millions at Bioterror Risk'

03 April – BBC News reported "hundreds of millions" of people could be at risk of bioterrorist attacks if scientists are not "policed", an expert has warned. Dr John Steinbruner, a US international security policy expert, says a body must be set up to regulate who has access to "highly consequential" research into biotechnology. Dr Steinbruner told BBC News Online if the threat was not taken seriously now: "It could mean hundreds of millions of people being at risk." His warning came as UK researchers said NHS staff did not know what they should do in the event of a bioterror attack. [View Article](#)

Monthly Migraines 'Preventable'

01 April – BBC News reported women who suffer the misery of [migraines](#) at the time of their period could be helped by a new treatment, according to a study. The disabling headaches can be prevented by taking a new drug before menstruation, a US trial suggests. The therapy, frovatriptan succinate, is already available in the US and is about to be licensed in the UK. Frovatriptan is a member of a class of drugs called triptans, which reduce inflammation of certain blood vessels in the brain thought to cause pain. It is currently prescribed for acute migraine attacks but its use could be extended as a prevention for menstrually associated migraines (MAM). The US trial involved 545 women with MAM who were treated for three months with frovatriptan or placebo. About half of the patients on the drug had no headaches while taking it compared with about a quarter of the placebo group. [View Article](#)

New TB Blood Test Shows Promise

03 April – ABC News reported scientists have developed a new diagnostic test for [tuberculosis](#) that experts say could help control the disease in the developed world by more accurately detecting infections before people get sick. About 10 percent of people progress from a latent, or inactive, infection to the disease, but doctors cannot predict who or when. People can transmit the bug only when they get sick, so picking up infections early helps stop the spread. A study published this week in The Lancet medical journal indicated that the new test detected latent infections more accurately than the standard skin-prick test used for a century. [View Article](#)

Risk of Mole Becoming Cancerous Is Low: Study

03 April – Reuters reported the risk of any particular mole becoming cancerous, especially in the young, is low, a new study shows. The findings suggest that mole removal, as a precautionary measure to avoid [melanoma](#), would be of little benefit to most young people, according to researchers. They estimate that among men and women younger than 40, less than 1 in 200,000 moles develop into melanoma in a given year. The yearly "transformation rate" is about 1 in 33,000 for men older than 60, substantially higher than that of women their age, according to findings published in the Archives of Dermatology. [View Article](#)

SARS Update

02 April – ABC News reported U.S. health officials said they now have a test to determine whether patients have [SARS](#). The new antibody test isn't perfected enough to be given to doctors yet, but it is being used to help state health departments sort out whether they have cases of SARS. [View Article](#) 04 April – The CDC has published recommendations to assist EMT service providers who transport SARS patients. These guidelines aim to ensure the safety of patients and transport personnel. These interim recommendations are based on standard infection control practices and available epidemiologic information regarding the transmission of SARS. [View Interim Recommendations](#) 04 April – MSNBC News reported President Bush issued an executive order allowing the forced quarantine of people suspected of having SARS. The executive order grants authority to Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson to decide when such a quarantine is needed. [View Article](#) In a related article in Japan Today, it was reported a health ministry council decided Friday that people diagnosed with severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) in Japan will be forcibly hospitalized if they

refuse to seek treatment. [View Article](#) Finally, on 08 April, Reuters reported that doctors still haven't pinned down exactly how SARS spreads because more cases are pointing to possible new ways it is passing from one victim to another. Some theories include SARS being spread by cockroaches or a latter-day version of Typhoid Mary, a cook in early 20th century America who spread typhoid fever without showing symptoms herself. [View Article](#)

Cumulative Number of Reported Probable [§] Cases of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) From: 1 Nov 2002¹ To: 9 Apr 2003

Country	Cumulative # of case(s)	Number of deaths	Local chain(s) of Transmission ²
Brazil	1	0	None
Canada	94	10	Yes
China	1280	53	Yes
China, Hong Kong	970	27*	Yes
China, Taiwan	19	0	Yes
France	4	0	None
Germany	5	0	None
Italy	3	0	None
Malaysia	1	1	None
Republic of Ireland	1	0	None
Romania	1	0	None
Singapore	118	9	Yes
Spain	1	0	None
Switzerland	1	0	None
Thailand	7	2	None
United Kingdom	5	0	None
United States	149	0	None
Viet Nam	62	4	Yes
Total	2722	106	

Notes:

Cumulative number of cases includes number of deaths.

As SARS is a diagnosis of exclusion, the status of a reported case may change over time. This means that previously reported cases may be discarded after further investigation and follow-up.

1. The start of the period of surveillance has been changed to 1 November 2002 to capture cases of atypical pneumonia in China that are now recognized as being cases of SARS.

2. National public health authorities report to WHO on the areas in which local chain(s) of transmission is/are occurring. These areas are provided on the list of [Affected Areas](#).

§Due to differences in the case definitions being used at a national level, probable cases are reported by all countries except the United States of America, which is reporting suspect cases under investigation.

*One death attributed to Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of China occurred in a case medically transferred from Viet Nam.

Study: Pill Use May Raise Cervical Cancer Risk

03 April – Reuters reported women who take [birth control pills](#) could be increasing their risk of [cervical cancer](#), scientists warned. A review of research by scientists from the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) in Lyon, France and the London-based charity Cancer Research UK shows that the longer women use the pill the greater their chances of developing the disease. Women who used the pill five years or less had a 10 percent increased risk. Up to nine years pushed it up to 60 percent and a decade or more doubled the risk compared to women who have never taken the pill. [View Article](#)

Treatment of Herpes Zoster and Postherpetic Neuralgia

05 April – The British Medical Journal published a paper on treatment of [Herpes zoster](#), which requires treatment to manage acute symptoms and reduce the risk of long-term complications. Johnson and colleagues discuss the treatment options of herpes zoster infection (shingles) and suggest that most cases can be handled in primary care. They advocate the use of antiviral drugs in the acute stage of shingles to reduce the risk of prolonged pain, particularly for patients aged 50 or more and for immunocompromised patients. In patients with [postherpetic neuralgia](#), treatment includes more than one drug, but they also need advice on psychosocial issues. For example, keeping up with physical and social activities should be encouraged, as well as wearing natural fiber clothing. If effective pain control is not achieved, primary care providers should refer patients to specialist care. [View Article](#)

U.S. Team Formulates 'Bird Flu' Vaccine

03 April – Reuters reported U.S. scientists said on Thursday they have developed a vaccine against the Hong Kong "bird flu" -- an unusually deadly form of influenza that has badly frightened health officials. The [flu](#), known by its genetic designation H5N1, has killed eight people and infected just over 20 in two outbreaks, but its deadliness prompted Hong Kong health officials to slaughter millions of chickens in 1997. The team at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in Memphis, Tennessee, said they used a type of genetic tinkering called reverse genetics to weaken the virus and make a vaccine. St. Jude's Richard Webby, who helped develop the vaccine, found the string of amino acids that make the most toxic part of the virus and figured out how to remove them. He replaced the genetic code with a similar code from the less-dangerous H1N1 "master" strain of virus commonly used to make vaccines. [View Article](#)

USEUCOM

Cholera Outbreak Contained, Says Health Official

02 April – IRIN News reported the Ugandan health authorities on Tuesday said several medical teams had been dispatched to districts affected by a cholera epidemic sweeping through most of the country's western regions, bordering the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). John Kyabaggu, the director of health services told journalists on Tuesday that nine deaths and over 230 cases of [cholera](#) had been reported in the west over the past two weeks alone. The districts most affected were Bundibugyo, Hoima, Kasese, and Masindi, he said. Cases had also been reported in Kabarole, Arua and Nebbi. Kyabaggu went on to say that the epidemic had now been brought "under control". "We already have a surveillance team from headquarters that is monitoring the situation and visiting the affected areas," he said. He attributed the outbreak to the "uncontrolled" human and commercial traffic across the border with the DRC, and poor sanitation and hygienic practices. He urged the public to observe "proper hygienic conditions" such as ensuring that they regularly boiled their drinking water. [View Article](#)

Death Toll from Congo's Ebola Outbreak Reaches 120

09 April – Reuters reported the death toll in a deadly [Ebola](#) outbreak has risen to 120 in northwestern Congo Republic, the central African country's health ministry said. An official at the ministry said 135 cases had been recorded since the virus, which has no known cure, struck in January in the dense forests of Cuvette-Ouest, some 700 km (440 miles) north of the capital, Brazzaville. Authorities say the disease has now almost been brought under control. [View Article](#)

Mauritania: Authorities Move to Contain Crimean-Congo Hemorrhagic Fever

05 April – ProMED mail reported 30 people have been reported dead in Mauritania, following an outbreak of [Crimean-Congo hemorrhagic fever](#) (CCHF). This is according to figures released by the Health Ministry on 8 March 2003. Confirming the outbreak, reports from Mauritanian authorities and the Institut Pasteur (a World Health Organization (WHO) Research Center in Dakar, Senegal) indicate that the most affected regions are Trarza, Brakna, and Hodh Gharbi, to the east of Nouakchott. [View Article](#)

Sierra Leone: Outbreak of Lassa Fever in Refugee Camps

4 April – ProMed reported on Thu 3 Apr 2003 an outbreak of [Lassa fever](#) was reported in refugee camps in the south and east of the country. This follows the return of a British soldier from Sierra Leone to the UK with Lassa fever in February 2003. This dangerous viral disease is transmitted by rats and by contact with body fluids of infected people. [View Report](#)

UK Doctors May Not Be Ready for Bio-Attack, Survey Finds

03 April – Reuters reported doctors in Britain may not be aware of what to do in the event of a [biochemical attack](#), researchers warned on Thursday. A survey of 77 doctors in southwest England who could be called on to respond to an attack as part of a medical mobile team found that only 26 had read all or part of an emergency plan and just 11 were aware of their potential role. In a letter published in The British Medical Journal the researchers said "they believed that not enough medical staff are aware of their role in the event of a terrorist attack." Only three of the doctors questioned in the survey thought they had been adequately prepared for their role, although they had been trained as medical incident officers. [View Article](#)

USCENTCOM

Afghanistan: Health Profile One of the Worst in the World

07 April – IRIN News reported Afghan President Hamid Karzai expressed deep concern for millions of women and children being threatened by increasing rates of maternal and infant mortality in his war-ravaged country. "Afghanistan's need for health services is deeper than any other country's," the president said. He said the average life expectancy in Afghanistan was 45

years, which was indicative of how severe poverty remained for the majority. The major causes of child mortality included [diarrhea](#), [acute respiratory infection](#), [malaria](#) and [micronutrient deficiencies](#). [View Article](#)

Aid Agencies Alarmed at Medical Shortages in Iraq

08 April – Reuters reported aid agencies warned overwhelmed Baghdad hospitals were running low of life-saving medicines and supplies and that civilian casualties were mounting in Iraq's besieged capital. Some supplies are getting through to hospitals but heavy fighting has prevented teams in Baghdad from moving about more. In addition, the capital's main surgical hospitals and water treatment plants now rely solely on back-up generators because the normal power supply has been cut. In Saddam City, a poor area in northeast Baghdad, the flow of tap water has been cut by half, according to the ICRC. Both the World Health Organization (WHO) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) expressed concern about reports of diarrhea diseases among children in southern Iraq being on the rise due to their drinking contaminated water. [View Article](#)

Cholera Outbreak Confirmed in Mogadishu

03 April – IRIN News reported an outbreak of [cholera](#) has been confirmed in the Somali capital, Mogadishu, an official of the World Health Organization (WHO) told IRIN on Thursday. According to the official, "99 stool samples were collected and checked by an AMREF [African Medical and Research Foundation] laboratory in the Kenyan capital, Nairobi, where they confirmed 46 samples are positive for cholera ogawa". Since the criteria for opening a cholera treatment center (CTC) had been met, Action Contre La Faim (ACF) had opened such a facility on 1 April, he added. The local authorities activated a regional cholera task force in collaboration with WHO, other UN agencies involved in health and ACF "to monitor and contain the situation". [View Article](#)

Relief Efforts Prove Difficult To Pull Off

04 April — The Washington Times reported food is in the warehouse and water is in the pipeline, but getting the needed relief to the people of southern Iraq has proved a surprisingly difficult task for coalition forces eager to win their trust. Trucks have disappeared from the streets, short-circuiting local deliveries. Train engines have vanished off the rails, making it impossible to plan for the long-haul distribution of bulk supplies. Waves of looting have destroyed part of the recently repaired electrical grid. No U.N. agencies or private relief groups have begun working here for security reasons. They also are reluctant to be seen as working with the U.S. military or accepting security from an armed force. [View Article](#)

Tajikistan: Increasing Donor Support for TB Control

04 April – IRIN News reported due to enhanced political stability in Tajikistan resulting from the ongoing successful peace process, donors and aid agencies are stepping up efforts to contain [tuberculosis \(TB\)](#), which continues to figure as a major public health emergency there. Aid workers believe that with improved stability and security, donors are more confidently investing in longer-term and more diverse programs. According to Tom Mohr from Project HOPE, some 10 of every 100,000 Tajiks die of TB annually – a very high percentage in global terms. The

government and aid agencies estimate the annual new-notification rate for TB at 127 per 100,000. [View Article](#)

USNORTHCOM

CDC Denies Mosquito Spray-Pesticide Link

04 April – Yahoo News reported a mosquito spraying method that health officials say is central to fighting [West Nile virus](#) does not increase pesticide levels in humans, federal officials said. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention examined the potential health dangers of exposure to mosquito spray from fogger trucks after a request by Mississippi state health officials in September. Officials interviewed and took urine samples from 192 residents of four cities in Mississippi. Two of the cities used truck foggers for mosquito control. The CDC concluded that local mosquito control activities did not lead to increased pesticide levels. [View Article](#)

New CDC Emergency Center a Public Health 'War Room'

02 April – CNN News reported the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has a new \$7.1 million [emergency operations center](#) to guard against [bioterrorist attacks](#) and help it track outbreaks of emerging diseases such as [West Nile virus](#) or [SARS](#). Due to the first cases of severe acute respiratory syndrome, the center went into action March 14, weeks earlier than its planned dedication. The center allows health officials to receive data and information from disease detectives in the field, and officials can quickly confer with international and federal agencies during a health crisis. [View Article](#)

CDC: Report of Suspected SARS Cases Under Investigation in the United States as of 08 April

State	#*	State	#*	State	#*	State	#*
Alabama	1	Kansas	1	New Jersey	3	Texas	5
California	36	Maine	2	New Mexico	1	Utah	5
Colorado	5	Massachusetts	4	North Carolina	5	Vermont	2
Connecticut	3	Michigan	2	New York	21	Virginia	3
Florida	7	Missouri	2	Ohio	5	Washington	12
Georgia	2	Mississippi	1	Oregon	1	<u>Wisconsin</u>	<u>1</u>
Hawaii	5	Minnesota	5	Pennsylvania	5	Total	154
Illinois	7	New Hampshire	1	Rhode Island	1		

*[Case definition](#)

(<http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/sars/casedefinition.htm>)

For more information; visit this CDC [SARS web site](#).

Texas: Exotic Newcastle Disease Suspected

07 April – ProMed reported a flock of non-commercial chickens south of El Paso is suspected of having [Exotic Newcastle Disease](#) (END), a foreign-origin virus that is deadly to poultry and birds. A U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) veterinarian examined the birds Saturday, 5 Apr 2003, after receiving a report of high death loss in the flock. While awaiting laboratory

confirmation of the presumptive diagnosis, a team of state and federal animal health officials has gathered on site to contain the flock and to assess the area to determine if infection may have spread to nearby flocks, or if birds or poultry might have been exposed to the sick birds recently transported from the area. If the disease is confirmed, Texas will be the fourth state to be stricken by this foreign poultry disease since October 2002, when an END outbreak was detected in California. Since then, the virus also has been found--and eradicated--in backyard flocks in Arizona and Nevada. [View Report](#)

Update: Adverse Events Following Smallpox Vaccination --- United States

02 April – The CDC reported during 24 Jan - 28 Mar 2003, [smallpox vaccine](#) was administered to 29,584 civilian health-care and public health workers in 54 jurisdictions as part of an effort to prepare the United States for a terrorist attack using smallpox virus. This report summarizes data on 10 cases of cardiac adverse events reported among civilian vaccinees since the beginning of the smallpox vaccination program, including 3 new cardiac adverse events reported to CDC from the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System ([VAERS](#)) during 24-30 Mar 2003. 14 cases of [myocarditis](#) and one fatal [myocardial infarction](#) have been reported among military personnel [View Article](#)

USPACOM

3 Fall Ill in Kanagawa from Possible WWII Poison Gas

04 April – Japan Today reported three construction workers fell ill after sniffing bottles found on the site of a former Imperial Japanese Navy facility involved in the research of toxic gas, local authorities said. Although the workers' condition has improved, they are still hospitalized, police officials said. Kanagawa police have sent a chemical squad to the site to investigate. The Sagami naval works is believed to have been involved in the production of chemical weapons before and during World War II. [View Article](#)

Australian *Salmonella montevideo* Outbreak Linked to Imported Tahini.

07 April – ProMed reported cases of [S. montevideo](#) are being reported in Australia, principally in New South Wales, with 54 Australian cases detected since 1 Nov 2002. The implicated imported tahini has been recalled. Information from interviews with new cases in conjunction with food sample testing are suggesting possible links with other sources of tahini. Countries detecting an increase of *S. montevideo* cases could ask about history of travel to Australia and consumption of sesame seed-based foods. [View Report](#)

More Dengue Fever in PACOM

07 April – ProMed reported an epidemic of [dengue fever](#) is sweeping Nauru, the island at the center of the Pacific solution refugee policy, as more than 20 asylum-seekers and staff are "strongly suspected" of having the disease. A vigorous attempt to solve the problem is under way in the 2 camps, which house 457 asylum-seekers sent there after being intercepted en route to Australia. The outbreak on Nauru was so bad recently that 100 locals a day were reporting to hospital with symptoms. That number has dropped to about 20 people reporting

each day. In addition, On Thu 3 Apr 2003, Tongan health authorities confirmed 2 cases of dengue fever in Tongatapu, after blood samples tested positive in New Zealand. The 2 persons were reported to have recently arrived from Fiji, where there is an outbreak of the mosquito-borne fever. Finally, the Dengue fever outbreak in Australia continues to spread. There are signs that the dengue fever epidemic may be spreading south from Cairns in the far north of Queensland, with a case of dengue fever reported in Townsville. [View Report](#)

Malaysia: Human Enterovirus 71 Outbreak in Sarawak; Emerging New Sub-genogroup

03 April – ProMed reported Sarawak is currently experiencing a large outbreak of [human enterovirus 71 \(HEV71\)](#) that began in February 2003. Most cases have uncomplicated [hand, foot and mouth disease \(HFMD\)](#), but a small number include neurologic disease. More than 70 strains isolated this year have been sequenced in the VP4 gene region. The results show that 80 percent of the strains belong to genogroup C1 (which has been seen sporadically in the Asia-Pacific region since 1997) and suggest that the next big outbreak of HEV71 in the region will likely be due to strains from this genogroup. The remaining strains belong to a distinct cluster within the B genogroup and may represent an emerging new sub-genogroup. [View Report](#)

Pacific Command Limits Asia Trips Due to SARS Outbreak

04 April – The American Forces Press Service reported Defense Department personnel may make only mission-essential trips to China and Hong Kong because of the threat of [severe acute respiratory syndrome](#). "All Hong Kong port visits by U.S. Navy ships will be deferred until the restriction has been lifted," Pacific Command spokeswoman Lt. Cmdr. Jensin Sommer said. The restriction is consistent with recommendations made by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The U.S. State Department has also issued a travel advisory citing the disease. The travel advisory includes China, Hong Kong, Singapore and Hanoi, Vietnam. Sommer stressed that the Pacific Command restriction is temporary. The limitation applies to all military and civilian DoD personnel. Sommer noted that no U.S. military service member has been diagnosed with SARS to date. [View Article](#)

Vietnam: Suspected Enterovirus Involvement in Childhood Deaths

08 April – ProMed reported at least 10 Vietnamese children aged less than 3 years have died in the past month from an unidentified virus that is suspected to belong to the [enterovirus](#) group. The 10 deaths were reported among 11 children admitted into Ho Chi Minh City's Children Hospital One. They all had high fever, diarrhea, fell into comas, and developed respiratory and heart failure. Doctors were working to identify the virus that they suspected may belong to the 'enterovirus' group, which infects the intestines and causes paralysis, vomiting, and diarrhea. Tests for known viruses, including the one that causes Japanese encephalitis, were negative. Officials and doctors at the hospital declined comment. [View Report](#)

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Brazil: Novel Coronavirus Detected in Chicken Intestinal Contents

03 April – ProMed reported The College of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Sao Paulo has found a coronavirus in intestinal contents of a chicken by a PCR targeted to the RNA-dependent RNA polymerase gene (pol gene). Sequence analysis of this gene showed that, though it is grouped closely with bovine [coronavirus](#) and is distantly related to infectious bronchitis virus, it has low nucleotide identity to all known coronaviruses. The birds were 15 days old and had no clinical sign of any disease. These findings are quite similar to those associated with the coronavirus implicated in SARS. [View Report](#)

Please contact the below-listed POC for suggested improvements and/or comments regarding this report. This report is also available on the USACHPPM website at <http://chppm-www.apgea.army.mil/Hiupdate/>.

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